

# ***Milford DO – IT / Main Street Program***

## **~TOWN REPORT 2004~**

Milford Downtown Ongoing Improvement Team, a New Hampshire Main Street Program, is a public-private partnership working to promote, revitalize, and enhance the historic, natural, social and economic vitality of downtown Milford. Our mission is to involve the whole community through education and concentrated efforts, which are structured around the National Main Street Program's four-point approach: design, organization, promotion, and economic restructuring. We are a 501(c)3 non-profit organization made up of a volunteer Board of Directors, four committees and a paid full-time Executive Director. In 2002, Milford was honored by the National Main Street Center with its Great American Main Street Award.

Specific projects and programs of Milford DO-IT come directly from the community and are based on Milford's inherent assets. An open public work session in January helped formulate our agenda. In keeping with the idea of using a comprehensive approach, these projects and programs are all focused in one of four key areas: design, economic restructuring, promotion, and organization. Many towns across the state recognize the value of having either an economic development officer or downtown coordinator and have hired town employees for this position. In Milford, DO-IT has taken on this role and has been able to produce notable results at a cost which is significantly less than if the Town were to handle these activities in-house. Milford DO-IT is funded in part by the community via a warrant article amount of \$15,000 and primarily through fund-raising and private donations. All monies are directly re-invested to benefit the Town.

Throughout the course of the year, DO-IT volunteers and staff worked to improve and support the health and vitality of the downtown area. Whether it was by collaborating with the Garden Club on the plantings around the Oval, hanging the seasonal banners and holiday decorations, providing information about the Town to residents, business and visitors, coordinating our own events, or participating with other local organizations on events in downtown such as the Harriet Wilson tribute lecture with Henry Louis Gates, the Teen Resource Conference and subsequent Teen Council Rock Off, or having an active voice on various town committees such as the Police Facility Building Design Committee, we played an important role in improving the quality of life in downtown and in Milford as a whole.

One of DO-IT's proudest accomplishments for this year is its successful application for grants to preserve the bandstand for the town of Milford. Grant funds in the amount of \$9,570 and \$4,930 were awarded from the NH State Council on the Arts Cultural Conservation Fund and the Milford Marchesi Foundation, providing for a funding package of \$14,500. The grants provide funds to carry out the restoration work, which frees up DPW personnel and Town funding for other projects. Grant money from the NH State Council on the Arts is generated through the voluntary purchase of 'Moose Plate' license plates. We thank all who have opted to purchase them.

At time of compilation the complete project scope has not yet been finalized but it is anticipated that restoration of the Milford Bandstand will include repairs to the eight

support column bases, top and bottom rails, matched millwork and decorative panes, replacement of missing wood on spindle panels, ceiling batting, eave moldings, building and installing new flower boxes, washing, scraping and repainting of entire structure, cleaning the roof, and replacement of electrical/light fixtures. Work will begin in spring 2005 and will be completed in time for Milford's Memorial Day activities. The Bandstand has served as a community gathering place and cultural center for the past 110 years and DO-IT is thrilled that we are able to ensure that it will continue to be at the heart of the Milford Oval for many years to come.

Over the past year, the Milford DO-IT design team has been formulating a plan for making improvements to the South Street corridor. A designer was hired to come up with a conceptual plan that meets the overall goal of improving traffic flow, safety, aesthetics, and parking. The design team has also been collaborating with the Harriet Wilson Project to coordinate these improvements with their plans for the creation of a Harriet Wilson monument in Bicentennial Park and landscaping of that park. The design team also continued its tradition of fostering downtown improvements through small matching grants. This year, we provided a grant to K. D. Crumbles Fine Cookie Merchants for their excellent improvements to the exterior of their Union Square location.

In an effort to keep tabs on the economic health of the downtown, the Economic Restructuring Committee collaborated with the Milford High School marketing class and the Nashua Regional Planning Commission on conducting a downtown business inventory and establishing a Geographic Information System database for tracking and mapping business trends. In 2005, we would like to turn this into a downtown market analysis.

Over the course of the past decade, Milford DO-IT has established a set of popular seasonal events and these continued to be successful in 2004. In the spring, Milford DO-IT once again collaborated with the Keyes Art Group to bring the Keyes Art Show, complete with entertainment and kids activities, to the Community House Lawn. The Milford Farmers Market held each Saturday morning throughout the summer in the Bank of New Hampshire parking lot, is a popular venue for customers to purchase fresh produce, breads and flowers. In summer, we celebrated our seventh season of the Summertime Lunch Concert series bringing great music and fun to the downtown on Thursday afternoons in July.

Perhaps the best known and certainly the best-attended event organized by Milford DO-IT with the assistance of Souhegan Home and Hospice Care is the Milford Great Pumpkin Festival. This year was the Festival's 15th anniversary, the many dedicated volunteers and supporters, and the terrific turnout showed that this event remains an important part of Milford's annual traditions. Supporters should know that 100% of the proceeds from this event go directly back into programs that improve the quality of life in Milford.

Winter in Milford is especially charming and this year was no exception. By working in conjunction with the Lions Club, we once again were able to deck the Oval with the finest of holiday decorations including the Christmas tree. A new event this year was the tree decorating and lighting and community caroling in early December, replete with hot cocoa, popcorn, and cookies.

The past year's activities have proceeded smoothly thanks to the continued dedication of all of our supporters. Hundreds of individuals, businesses, and organizations joined us demonstrating their belief in the importance of the downtown, donating their time, energy, and financial resources to the program. As always, we are most grateful for this support.

We continue to be honored to serve the community of Milford and look forward to a successful 2005. As always, we welcome and encourage all to get involved by calling 672-4567.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Board of the Milford Main Street Program  
DO-IT,

Alan Woolfson  
President  
Board of Directors

Jessica Hejtmanek  
Executive Director

**Thank you!**